

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-10

PA-04 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 TRSE-00

OMB-01 DRC-01 /113 W

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R 140740Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1041

INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 1714

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, RP, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN IMPORTATION OF FILIPINO WORKERS

REF: (A) MELBOURNE 158

(B) MANILA 1685 (NOTAL)

1. LABOR SECRETARY BLAS OPLE PROVIDED SOME INTERESTING INSIGHTS THIS TOPIC DURING COURSE FEB 14 CONVERSATION WITH LABATT. HE NOTED HE HAD URGED PRESIDENT MARCOS TO GIVE MATTER A PRIORITY POSITION ON BILATERAL TALKS AGENDA. AS IT TURNED OUT, WHITLAM HAD ALSO BEEN ANXIOUS TO ATTEMPT TO CLEAR AIR ON TOUCHY SUBJECT "WHITE AUSTRALIA" POLICY. AS MATTER OF FACT, HE DEALT WITH IMMIGRATION POLICY AT SOME LENGTH IN HIS FEB 11 SPEECH AT UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES.
2. IN WAY OF BACKGROUND, OPLE HAD LEARNED FROM WHITLAM PARTY THAT AUSTRALIAN LABOR MINISTER CAMERON HAD WANTED

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TO GO SLOW ON QUESTION IMPORTATION FILIPINO WORKERS AND

HAD RECOMMENDED FULL CABINET DEBATE BEFORE WHITLAM DISCUSSED TOPIC IN MANILA. WHITLAM HAD REJECTED DELAYING TACTICS IN FAVOR TAKING BULL BY HORNS. OPLE COMMENTED THAT WHILE WHITLAM STRATEGY NOT WITHOUT POLITICAL RISKS BACK HOME, IT BETTER TO HAVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING, WESTERN-ORIENTED FILIPINOS AS TRIAL CASE RATHER THAN SAY CHINESE, INDIAN, OR PAKISTANI WORKERS.

3. WITH RESPECT ACTUAL THIRTY-FIVE WORKERS -- WHO COULD BE FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER 1000 TO 1500 IF ALL GOES WELL -- OPLE EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THEY MIGHT BE OVER-QUALIFIED FOR POSITIONS LEYLAND HAD IN MIND. IF AS HE ANTICIPATED, FILIPINO APPLICANTS LIKELY TO BE SKILLED MECHANICS, THEY MIGHT SOON BECOME DISSATISFIED AND BORED WITH ASSEMBLY LINE JOBS OPEN TO THEM.

4. IN AIRPORT COMMENT TO NEWSMEN FOLLOWING WHITLAM DEPARTURE FEB 13, MARCOS EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT IMMIGRATION IRRITANTS WHICH HAD HAMPERED PHILIPPINE-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS HAVE BEEN REMOVED. QUICKLY TAKING CUE FROM PRESIDENT, FRONTPAGE HEADLINE FEB 14 IN ONE LEADING PAPER DECLARED "RP - AUSSIE TIES RID OF IRRITANTS, FILIPINO WORKERS WELCOME." SULLIVAN

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